

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough consideration provided in the present application. Claims 1-7 and 9 are now present in the application. Claims 1 and 9 have been amended. Claim 1 is independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Citation

An Information Disclosure Statement has been filed on December 11, 2009. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner confirm his consideration of the documents cited therein by returned an initialed PTO/SB/08 to the undersigned with the next action.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-7 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Nagamatsu et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,427,799. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

A complete discussions of the Examiner's rejections are set forth in the Office Action, and are not repeated herein.

Without conceding to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to timely advance the prosecution of the application, as the Examiner will note, independent claim 1 has been amended to more clearly clarify the present invention.

In particular, independent claim 1, as amended, includes the recitation of "*...wherein a **first gap** is provided in a part that constitutes a part of the spigot-joint fitting part of said first and second housings and that is located radially outward from a fixing nut screwed into said retaining part in order to apply a tightening force on said thrust bearing from one side, and wherein said first gap that constitutes a part overlaps, in an axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part, and wherein said fixing nut is in direct contact with said thrust bearing, and said **first gap** is larger*

than a second gap on a part of the spigot-joint fitting part where said first gap is not provided.”

Support for the amendments can be found at least at, for example, Fig. 3 and the corresponding disclosure of the Specification as originally filed. Thus, no new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully submit that the above-emphasized features set forth in claim 1 are not disclosed or suggested by the references relied on by the Examiner.

Specifically, as illustrated in Fig. 3 of the present application, the present invention requires that the first gap located radially outward from the fixing nut screwed into said retaining part is ***larger than a second gap on a part of the spigot-joint fitting part where said first gap is not provided*** (such as the seam between two elements coupled together in the spigot-joint fitting part).

On page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner refers to the joint seam between the first housing 21 and the second housing 22 that are coupled together as shown in Fig. 3 of Nagamatsu as the first gap of the present invention. Applicants respectfully disagree and submit that the portion between the first housing 21 and the second housing 22 pointed out by the Examiner is merely no more than a joint seam, which does not constitute a part of the spigot-joint fitting part and cannot be equivalent to the gap of the present invention which requires that the gap of the present invention is in a part that constitutes a part of the spigot-joint fitting part of said first and second housings apply a tightening force on said thrust bearing from one side. It is submitted that these feature cannot be achieved by the ordinary joint seam of Nagamatsu as pointed out by the Examiner.

However, merely in order to advance the prosecution of the application, claim 1 as set forth above has been amended to distinguish the gap as recited in claim 1 from ordinary joint seams. In view of this, Applicants respectfully submit that Nagamatsu, which merely teaches some ***uniform joint seams*** appearing in the place where two elements are coupled together, fails to teach or suggest “...wherein a ***first gap*** is provided in a part that constitutes a part of the spigot-joint fitting part of said first and second housings and that is located radially outward from a fixing nut screwed into said retaining part in order to apply a tightening force on said

thrust bearing from one side, and wherein said first gap that constitutes a part overlaps, in an axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part, and wherein said fixing nut is in direct contact with said thrust bearing, and said first gap is larger than a second gap on a part of the spigot-joint fitting part where said first gap is not provided” as recited in claim 1.

In addition, Applicants respectfully emphasize that the above identified feature of the present invention is also non-obvious, to the extent that the Examiner turns to apply an obviousness rejection. As clearly described in the Specification, the gap of the present invention is provided in a part of the spigot-joint fitting part and located on the outer side of the retaining part of the thrust bearing for supporting the rotating cylinder, so that an increase in the outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened in the inner side of the part where this gap is provided should be absorbed within the range of said gap. The problem in the integration of the first and the second housings by spigot-joint fitting can therefore be avoided. Further, a predetermined thrust load capability can be ensured by sufficient tightening of the fixing nut, so that the displacement of the steering shaft in the axial direction is performed stably, which is generated by motion conversion of the rotation of the rotating cylinder performed by the screw mechanism.

Therefore, it is clear that the feature with regard to the first gap recited in claim 1 is critical to the present invention and is absolutely not a design choice, to the extent that the Examiner asserts so in a future communication.

Based on the above, since Nagamatsu fails to teach each and every claimed feature as recited in claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 clearly defines over the teachings of Nagamatsu.

In addition, claims 2-7 and 9 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 1, and are therefore allowable based on their respective dependence from independent claim 1, which is believed to be allowable.

In view of the above amendments to the claims and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-7 and 9 clearly define the present invention over the references relied on by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102 are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Paul C. Lewis, Registration No. 43,368 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.147; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,



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